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WAR ON DRUGS BEGAN 14 CENTURIES AGO

The State of Qatar is to mark Anti-Drugs Day on June 26 as part of a global campaign against illicit drugs. The production, sale and consumption of intoxicating addictive drugs have become a world-wide problem. Today, hardly any country is safe from its destructive influence. The number of lives lost and ruined yearly because of drugs is unimaginable. Furthermore, the problem has been increasing exponentially with every decade. Due to the increased awareness of law-enforcement agencies around the world to the problem, an international war against drugs was declared some years ago and international bodies, like the UN, have made it a significant part of their agenda. However, for one-fifth of the world's population, the anti-drugs campaign began 1,400 years ago, when the rest of the world was drowning in drug-crazed debauchery. It began in a small city called Madinah, in the north of Arabia when the following Qur'anic verses (5: 90-91) were first revealed to Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*) and his followers:

> "*O Believers! Intoxicants, gambling, idolatry and fortune-telling are abominations devised by Satan. So, avoid them in order to be successful. Satan seeks to stir up enmity and hatred among you through intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and from regular prayer. So, will you not then desist?*" (Qur'an, 5:90-91)

The term used in the revelation, *khamr*, refers to all forms of intoxicating drugs as Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*) stated, "*Every intoxicant is khamr and every form of khamr is haraam (forbidden)*." The Prophet (*peace be upon him*) was also quoted as saying: "*Every intoxicant and every narcotic is unlawful*," and, "*If a substance intoxicates when taken in large quantities then even small quantities of it are forbidden*." The most common and popular intoxicating drug in the seventh century was alcohol and it remains until today, in spite of the wide variety of synthetic drugs which are currently on the market. Consequently, its production, sale and consumption were all absolutely abolished with the revelation of this verse in the heart of Arabia 14 centuries ago.

Clauses in the Prohibition

It is worth noting that the prohibition of drugs in these two Qur'anic verses addresses a number of socio-religious issues with far-reaching implications.

Label: Branding Drugs as an Abomination (Rijs).

By labeling drugs as filth in this verse, Allah addresses the natural inclination of human psychology to avoid what is filthy, dirty and nasty. No matter how clean and pure something might seem at first, once someone informs that it is, in fact, impure and filthy, humans are naturally inclined to avoid it. The divine label of "*filth*" also counters the various enticing names which people may give to drugs, like ecstasy, ice, etc. Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*) also referred to drugs as filth saying, "*Intoxicants are the mother of all filthy and evil acts*."

Classification: Equating drugs to Gambling and Idolatry

The Almighty put intoxicating substances in the same category as gambling, where most people lose their savings, become addicted and destroy their lives. The harm of gambling is so well known that most countries have laws prohibiting most of its forms. Taking drugs is a big gamble. Many people die from it and most have their lives ruined. Only a few who become addicted to it manage to escape its clutches and return to a normal life. In these verses drug consumption is also put on par with sacrifice to false gods; something so objectionable that most societies today have abandoned it. When a person takes drugs, he sacrifices his health, his wealth and his faith to the false gods which his own desires have become, as the Almighty said, "*Have you seen the one who makes his desires his god?*" (Qur'an)

Health and wealth are blessings from God which are to be used in beneficial ways pleasing to God. They are responsibilities about which everyone will be asked on the Day of Judgment. The Prophet (*peace be upon him*) said, "*No one's feet will move from his place of resurrection until he is asked about five things: his health and how he used it, his wealth from where he earned it and how he spent it, ...*"

Drug consumption is also made equivalent to fortunetelling, which is absolutely forbidden in Islam. Fortunetelling, which claims knowledge of the unseen and the future belonging exclusively to God, is a major act of disbelief. Thus, Allah implies that the very faith of those who consume drugs comes into question. Prophet Muhammad (*peace*

be upon him) reiterated this point by saying, "*A person is not a believer while he drinks alcohol*."

By classifying drugs on a par with games of chance, idolatrous practices and the fortunetelling, all of which have been pronounced as absolutely forbidden, the prohibition of drugs is further emphasized.

Satanic Origin: Branding them as devised by Satan.

Allah identified the origin of drugs for humans to realize that they are weapons of their most avowed enemy, Satan. In the battle for human souls, Satan uses a variety of tools which he beautifies and makes alluring in order to trap human beings

Avoidance: Emphasizing the Prohibition by using Avoidance.

Allah's use of the imperative '*avoid'* makes the injunction much stronger and more comprehensive than it would have been had the word 'prohibited' been used instead. The implication here is that one should not only refrain from the consumption of drugs but also anything to do with their production and distribution should be avoided. Consequently, the Prophet (*peace be upon him*) said, "*Ten people are cursed due to intoxicants, the one who prepares it, the one for whom it was prepared, the one who consumes it, the one who carries it, the one to whom it is carried, the one who pours it, the one who sells it, the one who benefits from its sale, the one who buys it and the one for whom it was bought*."

He further emphasized the importance of avoidance by stating, "*One should not sit at a table at which alcohol is consumed*." Furthermore, the Prophet (*peace be upon him*) prohibited Muslims from even keeping the containers in which alcohol was traditionally kept.

Success: Linking the avoidance of Drugs to Prosperity

In the above verse, the Almighty also made the avoidance of intoxicants a precondition for prosperity. People naturally desire success and wealth and they despise failure and poverty. Thus, Allah addresses the human psyche by promising success to those who avoid intoxicants. When the wealth normally consumed by addicts is recycled, the financial benefits to society are quite tangible. However, the social benefits to both the individual and family are even more priceless. Furthermore, real wealth, is as the Prophet (*peace be upon him*) said "richness of the heart and soul, and not an abundance of

property." It is contentment which those who take drugs seek but never find, and that only comes from a sober search for God.

Ultimate success is paradise, so the Prophet (*peace be upon him*) informed that, "One who consumes drugs and does not repent will not drink it in the Hereafter even if he enters Paradise."

Sows Discord and Hatred

In these verses, the Almighty points out that Satan uses drugs to create enmity among people. It has been proven statistically that the majority of hate-crimes are committed by those under the influence of drugs.

Hinders Remembrance of God and Prayer

The Almighty warned of the most evil consequence of drug consumption; that it prevents people from remembering God and making regular prayer, which is their regular means of remaining in contact with God. Once the consciousness of God is lost, corruption quickly fills the vacuum and those under the influence easily commit the most heinous of crimes without any sense of shame or morality. Intoxicated people are very susceptible to the most perverse suggestions. They lose their shyness and moral values leading to some of the most incredibly evil acts.

Reports of drug-crazed fathers raping their own baby daughters, husbands killing their wives and eating them, and so on, abound in newspapers around the world. In one narration from the Prophet (*peace be upon him*) he was reported to have said, "*Intoxicants are the mother of despicable acts and the greatest of major sins. Whoever consumes them abandons regular prayer, and rapes his mother or his aunt*." Prayer is a deterrent against indecency and sinfulness, as the Almighty said (Qur'an) and it is the foundation of remembrance of God. Allah points out that the consumption of drugs breaks the believers' main link with God and thereby destroys spiritual well-being. In order to further emphasize its danger to prayer, the Prophet (*peace be upon him*) said, "*The prayer of one who drinks alcohol will not be accepted for forty days and nights*."

A Rhetorical Question

This verse is concluded with a rhetorical question, "*Will you not, then, desist?*" This grammatical construction creates the strongest possible threat. On hearing it, the Prophet's companion's response was, "*We do, Our Lord: We do!*" After hearing all the

expressions of prohibition and grasping their implications, can an intelligent person ignore warning? This question addresses common sense and reason. It invites the thinking person to make the necessary steps to help remove this destructive channel from society.

History Repeats Itself

Descriptions of Madinah at the time when these verses were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (*peace be upon him*) illustrate the impact that they had on the fledgling community there. Historians reported that the streets of Madinah flowed with wine, as containers were broken and poured in the streets, and even those who had cups of wine in their hands and others who had wine glasses at their lips, stopped immediately and emptied them in the streets.

The prohibition of drugs has remained a way of life for Muslims from that day until today. Though some elements of Muslim society have indulged at different points in history, and many modern Muslim governments have become lax and permissive, for the vast majority of Muslims, the production and consumption of drugs remains prohibited. In the West and East, governments of countries like, USA, Canada, Russia, etc., have at varying times in the 20th century and for varying lengths of time prohibited the production, sale and consumptions of alcohol, however, these periods of prohibition all came to an end. Drugs cannot be eliminated by legislation alone. Legislation is a beginning, it is a tool, but the will to implement the legislation has to come from the power of faith within the population as a whole. The various successful anti-addiction programmes, like Alcoholics Anonymous, which were developed in the secular West all require individuals trying to overcome their addictions to call on God, the Higher Power, to help them succeed.

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